THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. III. November 19, 1937 Kislev 15, 5698 No. 14

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By Milton Steinberg

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15 West 86th Street

Speaker: DR. JACOB S. GOLUB

Subject: "THE ROYAL COMMISSION REPORT"

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EDITORIALS

The Hadassah Resolution On Partition

THE Jubilee Convention of Hadassah concluded its sessions with the adoption of a resolution concerning the partition of Palestine which threw the weight of its influence against the British proposal. The resolution called upon the Zionist Executive to "bring about a constructive policy for implementation of the Mandate over an undivided Palestine." After a five-hour arduous debate the delegates issued this unequivocal appeal to the Zionist leadership, softening the tone of their utterance only by the disciplined assurance that they would ultimately abide by the decisions of a special Zionist Congress "which will be binding on the entire Zionist world."

The observer of events in Palestine can understand without much difficulty the increasing skepticism with which Zionists contemplate the proposed partition. This growing skepticism has nothing to do with the question of whether or not the founders of the movement conceived of rebuilt Palestine in terms of state sovereignty. It is quite independent of the question of economic security for Jews under their own government, or of physical safety. A very evident and unmistakable fact stands out above all speculations about the future.

That fact is that the very announcement by the British of the suggestion that Palestine be divided served to revive and intensify Arab terrorism. We must not forget that the Royal Commission proposed partition because, in their opinion, peace could never be achieved so long as Jews and Arabs defended interests which were "irreconcilable." The partition was intended to establish definitive limits to Jewish and Arab interests in such a way that these interests would cease to be irreconcilable. No other justification for partition exists except this, that it will bring the peace which the Mandate could not, by its very nature, produce.

Observe how well partition pacifies the Arabs. The mere contemplation of such a scheme has given rise to murder and arson. What would happen if direct steps were taken to implement partition staggers the imagination. Should it not already be apparent to British statesmen that partition stands no chance of achieving its avowed purpose? The British might say that they are prepared to enforce partition even at the point of a bayonet, to maintain a peace which is no peace. In that case, what advantage is there in partition, from their point of view, which does not already inhere in the Mandate? If force must be resorted

to, why are the British so eager to proceed with a new and untried program which must (so it seems) inevitably lead to civil war, and discard a set-up which, for at least some periods of years, produced no violent opposition?

Since neither the Arabs nor large elements among the Jews seem any too enthusiastic about partition, as at present formulated, whose interests would it advance? Obviously, the interests of the British. They are without question seeking merely to get out from under, to relieve themselves of a responsibility in Palestine. May we suggest that perhaps in their anxiety to rid themselves of that responsibility they are acting without due consideration for even their own interests. No one but a pollyanna optimist can ignore the fact that Italy and Germany are only too well prepared to step into any situation vacated by the British.

Palestine stands today in the danger of becoming a second Spain. Although its natural wealth is negligible, its position is strategic. The fascist nations are lying in ambush to destroy the power of the British Empire; they make very little secret of their ambitions. So long as Britain remains in Palestine, the provisions of the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations remain in force; and any overt attempt on the part of Italy and Germany to start trouble there can easily arouse sympathy for Great Britain on the part of the so-called democracies which preach the sanctity of treaties. Whereas in an independent Palestine a second Franco can easily be inspired to lead a revolt against "communist" Jewish government, and the fascist nations can, with the same impunity as in Spain, subsidize the revolt and ultimately gain control.

At present these realities seem to indicate that in the interests of peace and in the interests of checking fascist expansion the partition of Palestine is ill-advised. It is not at all unlikely that the feminine intuition of Hadassah has unerringly functioned. Their appeal for the implementation of the Mandate deserves solemn consideration.

The Christian Century On Jewish Nationhood

IN its issue of November 3rd, *The Christian Century* devotes an editorial to the Palestine situation. Though undoubtedly written with every intention to be fair, the editorial shows about as much logical confusion as if it were a British government document. With regard to the plan to partition Palestine, it takes a stand that is reasonable enough, pronouncing it a bad scheme since it satisfies neither Arabs nor Jews. But its inconsistent conclusion is: "Indefinite policing of mutually hostile peoples in a land holy to both of them is intolerable. The Arabs furnish most of the violence, the Jews most of the provocative claims to exclusive possession. Unless the wiser heads on each side control the policies of both, partition may be the only way out."

We are disposed to ask: Out of what? Since partition does not reconcile the claims of Arabs and Jews, it is only a *way out* of Great Britain's responsibility for discharging her obligations. It does not lessen the need of protecting the Jews of Palestine from the violence of the Arabs. Would the Christian Century condone Great Britain's betrayal of the Jews if she were to hand them over to the mercy of the Arabs? Or are Great Britain's international engagements in Palestine less morally binding than the treaty obligations of Japan?

Much of the editorial, however, seems designed to provide a rationale for just such a betrayal by Great Britain of her duties to the Jewish people in that it seeks to invalidate the internationally accepted status of the Jews as being in Palestine as "of right and not on sufferance." The editorial states that the Jewish claim to Palestine rests on the following syllogism: "The Jews constitute a folk. A folk must have a land. There is no

conceivable land except Palestine for the Jewish people. Therefore the Jews must have Palestine." The editorial then attacks the major premise of this syllogism. Conceding to the Jews a certain degree of racial kinship, it denies their possessing a common language and culture since few Jews talk Hebrew or are familiar with the Jewish cultural heritage. The editorial continues, "The whole argument that the Jews must have a land (that is, Palestine) because they are a nation or folk might be sound if such a conception as that presented, for example, in Dr. Kaplan's *Judaism as a Civilization* described a reality instead of an aspiration—a picture of what a few Jews would like to have all Jews be and do."

Such reasoning is a good example of that "logic chopping" which is more interested in verbal definition than in the solution of human problems. A people cries for a land because the loss of its land has frustrated its national self-expression and put all sorts of obstacles in the way of the preservation of its culture and language, and the reply is: You are not entitled to the land because not all of you are familiar with your culture or speak its language. By such logic, poverty would be a disqualification for receiving relief.

The casual manner in which the editorial disposes of the Jewish problem is evident in the fact that it does not even feel called upon to suggest an alternative category into which the Jewish people might fit if they are not to be regarded as a folk. Perhaps *The Christian Century* would classify them as a religious denomination. But we fear that this would not help matters at all. The Jewish people would be as hard put to it to find a *raison d'être* for itself as a religious denomination, if such a *raison d'être* must be based on reality and not on aspiration. Not all Jews are saints. We venture to say that by the same criteria not all Protestants are Christians. Would *The Christian Century* identify Christianity with the behavior of those who profess it, while dropping bombs on defenseless cities, or would it not accept the aspiration to Christian conduct as sufficient justification of the Church's right to exist though only a small minority of its membership take its teachings very seriously to heart? The Church is a sociological fact and so is the Jewish people, call it by what name you will.

True, Jewish civilization is today an aspiration rather than a reality for most Jews, but it is an aspiration that is based on realities, realities to which *The Christian Century* shuts its eyes. *The Christian Century* does not see the need which has given rise to the aspiration of the Jewish masses for a land in which they can normalize their economic life, so that there at least they will never be considered a "surplus population" as they are today in Poland. *The Christian Century* does not know the reality which makes Jews aspire to identify themselves with a congenial culture that shall be their very own and give them status and shall never be able to extrude them as the German Kultur has extruded the assimilated Jews of Germany. *The Christian Century* is blissfully unaware of the spiritual tragedy of parents who see their children being alienated from the religious folk-ways and mores that have been sacred to them by the pressure of a ruthlessly dominant majority culture, nor of the tragedy of youth that seeks spiritual anchorage in a religion that shall not be a museum piece but shall afford opportunity for participation in a collective effort in which his contribution as Jew shall be welcome and effective.

These are realities. The Jewish people is here, whether *The Christian Century* can fit it into the Procrustes' Bed of its definition of the term "folk" or not. Only a minority of its total membership may have a clear conception of its problems and needs. How many Americans could define their Americanism? But the actual achievements of the Zionist move-

ment show that the aspiration to Jewish nationhood is not the hobby of a small coterie of intelligentsia. It is a genuine mass-movement, a folk-movement.

These facts must be reckoned with in judging the Jewish claim to Palestine. In weighing that claim against the counter-claim of the Arabs consideration must be given to this cogent truth. There is no danger to the perpetuation of Arabic civilization, for to the Arabs have been given vast areas that are sparsely settled with almost limitless opportunities for development and expansion. But the Jewish civilization is dependent on Palestine, with which it has been historically identified. We should recommend to the editor of *The Christian Century* that he reread the parable with which the Prophet Nathan rebuked King David.

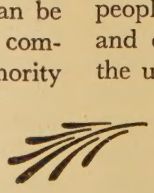
The Nazi Street Parade

SHOULD the Nazis have been given permission to parade in New York City streets the Saturday before election? Such a question can be legitimately asked and discussed, but whatever one's answer to the question, it should not be given as it was given by Dr. Margoshes of the *Day*. He should have stuck to the issue involved without trying to make political capital out of it to promote the candidacy of the Tammany nominee for Mayor.

No abstract or categorical answer can be given to the question whether to permit parades of Nazis in American city streets. If we truly believe in civil liberties, we cannot suppress freedom of speech or freedom of demonstration just because we do not like the views expressed or the people demonstrating. Suppression is a double-edged sword. If we permit its use against Nazis it can be used with equal effect to suppress communists and socialists and other minority groups, radical or otherwise. The test employed should be practical and empirical. If the parade or demonstration is calculated to incite riot, to actually endanger life and limb, then it should not be permitted. Thus in London, the fascists were not permitted to parade through the Jewish section of Whitechapel but were rerouted to other sections where there was no such danger. Using this criterion, we do not see how Mayor La Guardia could have acted otherwise. The parade would have caused no ripple of interest were it not staged before election time and used by the Mayor's opponents to embarrass him and get whatever political advantage out of it they could.

The whole incident, however, raises once again the fundamental question of what attitude democracies should take toward subversive elements within their midst whose aim it is to destroy democracy. For by permitting these elements to exist and to spread their dangerous propaganda unmolested, democracies endanger their own existence. This is the dilemma of liberalism and of democracy all over the world. And yet as real as the danger is, democracy cannot afford to use undemocratic means to suppress minority points of view and doctrines.

The real danger to us is in underestimating the danger of these subversive groups, and in failing to understand the real causes of their growth and influence. We cannot sit back in the faith that truth will prevail and that the Nazis will not gain a foothold in the United States. In such a passivity lies real danger. We must fight them actively and meet them on their own grounds. But even more, we must work for such social reconstruction as will remove the causes which make people flock to the banners of the Nazis and other such groups which prey upon the unsuspecting masses.



Some Reflections on the Royal Commission Report

By JACOB S. GOLUB*

I

THE report of the British Royal Commission, whatever we may think about it, is a very important state document for the Jews of the world. It recognizes certain fundamental Jewish rights for which we have long contended and of which we have not quite convinced the liberal world. The Commission very clearly and straightforwardly sets forth these rights and establishes them, let us hope, once for all.

Several such declarations in the Royal Commission report are of particular significance for us. The first is the case which the Royal Commission builds up for the Jewish claim to Palestine. When we ourselves lay claim to our homeland on historic grounds, our claim is too often discounted. It is argued that we have been away from Palestine for almost thirteen centuries, a length of time in which any bona fide, valid claim may well be lost. A new people has come and made itself master in the home which was once ours, and by now this people is too long established to be disturbed. The Royal Commission helps us to reestablish our claims. It points out that our right to Palestine rests on the fact that we have given it importance in ancient times through a unique religion and a great literature. But beyond the past the Commission has shown an unbroken record of connection between the Jews and Palestine. The Jew lived in Palestine in spirit wherever else he may have been. He prayed for rain and dew in their Palestinian season. But what is more the Jew never physically severed his contact with Palestine. There always were Jews in Palestine in greater or lesser number, so that we are not returning to a country which we have abandoned but from which at times we were forced out for shorter or longer periods.

The Commission also points out the present urgent need of the Jews for Palestine. Not merely in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe where the Middle Ages have returned but even in countries where supposedly a liberal civilization rules, the Jew is still an unwanted minority, uncertain of what the morrow may bring. Indeed so understandingly and so sympathetically is this aspect of the Jewish case presented by the Commission, that one almost suspects the hand of a Jewish ghost guiding the pen of the Royal Commissioners.

In another respect, too, the Royal Commission has contributed to strengthening the case of the Jewish people. The Royal Commission openly and unequivocally presents the argument for a Jewish State. The status of the Jew in Palestine has been floundering in ambiguity. The Balfour Declaration devised the term "a Jewish National Home," which may give the Jew much, little or nothing at all, depending upon the whim of the British administrator. Under a hostile administration the National Home concept has been so whittled down as to lead to the absurdity that we already have a National Home in Palestine. The Commission by its open declaration that what was intended originally and what still is contemplated is the creation of a Jewish State, once and for all clears the atmosphere and sets a goal for Jewish striving. The Jews may now openly work for the establishment of a State, a term which formerly they feared to utter.

Another service which the Royal Commission has rendered to the Jewish cause is by laying once and for all the myth that the Jews have hurt the Arabs economically. We ourselves have been able to prove beyond any refutation that we have in no way injured the Arabs, but on the contrary we have advanced their economic standard very materially. The habitual poverty of the Arab masses, however, the hopeless mire of debt in

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which they are sunk, and their generally exploited condition somehow lent credence to the charge of Jewish mistreatment of Arabs, so that the effendi and money lender were able to shift the blame from themselves to the Jews. Now the Commission impartially and publicly asserts that the Jews have benefited the Arabs, that the Arab standard of living has risen as the result of Jewish settlement in Palestine, and that the Arab lot has considerably improved due to the coming of the Jews.

II

If, however, we have much to be thankful for to the Commissioners, we have even more to resent and at which to be justifiably angered. For basically in spite of its assumed fairness and apparent sympathy to the Jewish cause, in spite of occasional compliments bordering on flattery, the Commission is nevertheless not sympathetic to the Jewish people. We shall not enter into the whole question of partition which in the form recommended by the Royal Commission was rejected by the Congress and the Jewish Agency. Should we later be forced to accept some form of partition, it will be largely under protest. But even aside from its partition recommendations, in the report in general, we sense a tone and spirit that can hardly be motivated by genuine friendship for the Jewish people.

To begin with, the report contains numerous pinpricks at Jewish nationalism. The Jewish schools, the report complains, are too nationalistic. The Jews fail to recognize that they and the Arabs must live in the same country, and consequently they fail to educate their children accordingly. True, the Jewish schools include a course in Arabic, whereas the Arabs would rise in resentment were the suggestion made that recognition be given to Hebrew in the Arabic schools. But a course in Arabic is not sufficient. Even the Hebrew University, maintaining as it does the finest department for Arabic studies in the Near East, is only a Hebrew and not a Palestinian university. The government is urged to encourage the mixed schools, which employ the English language. When the Jews complain that court records are kept only in Arabic and not in Hebrew, the Commission recommends that they be kept neither in Hebrew nor in Arabic but in English. Several times the report reiterates that Jewish nationalism loses in breadth what it gains in intensity, or words to that effect.

We may well wonder whether Jewish nationalism is so much more rabid, or as rabid, as the nationalisms which now prevail in Europe. That Jewish nationalism is experiencing a high degree of self-consciousness at the present time is quite obvious, but what else can be expected in a period of national self-reestablishment? The Commissioners on the other hand did find Tel Aviv and Jerusalem cosmopolitan centers where the finest of the world's literature was translated into Hebrew, and the finest of symphony music was played. The Jews, too, were willing to offer the Arabs parity in the establishment of a government. Certainly the Englishmen might well have removed the beam from their own eyes before seeking too many moats in those of the Jews.

The unfriendliness of the Royal Commission shows itself in another instance in connection with the Jewish Agency. The Commission seems to have a not too high regard for the government of Palestine. It points out that the government of Palestine is inefficient. It has been a government of the blind leading the blind, a government that has failed in the elementary duty of public security, that has pardoned offenders unnecessarily, and failed to ensure that respect for law and order which swift and certain punishment engendered. The government, too, has been remiss in failing to establish a land system, or in failing to promote Arab self-government, in the inexpertness with which it has handled the cities, and in numerous other counts. Even if the government were efficient, the report points out, it would still be unsuited to the needs of an intelligent Euro-

pean population like the Jews among whom a colonial type of administration can only call forth resentment and carping criticism. The Commission deplores the inevitability of such criticism which leads to irresponsibility on the part of the population.

But when in one small respect the Jewish Agency is given some responsibility, namely, in the apportionment of certificates, then the Royal Commission at once becomes fearful lest the Jews should fail to carry out their responsibility adequately. The Commission grants that the Jewish Agency is the proper body to determine what type of Jewish immigrant should enter the country—that the Jewish National Home, in other words should be developed out of human material of the Jews' own choosing. The Commission grants further that thus far the Jewish Agency has been well beyond criticism in its choice of immigrants. But, the Commission declares, a situation may arise in which the Jewish Agency may overstep its authority and do something that may prove to be not in the best interests of government; therefore the government should deprive the Agency of the only vestige of authority which it now exercises and assume a final review of the immigration schedule after the Jewish Agency shall have passed upon it. This incompetent government, in other words, is trusted to a greater degree than the efficient, scientific Jewish Agency upon which so many compliments are showered and which is otherwise exposed to the danger of irresponsibility.

Certainly the most unkind utterance in the Commission's report is the statement that Jewish suffering abroad has nothing to do with the problem of immigration into Palestine. Had the Commission based itself firmly on the principle of the economic absorptive capacity, then one might well argue that economic necessity knows no law—that it would be a disservice to the Jewish people already in Palestine to admit a greater number than the country can absorb economically. The Commission, however, is prepared to throw the principle of economic absorptive capacity overboard. Economic considerations alone, it claims, are insufficient as a determinant of immigration into Palestine. In addition to economic factors the reaction of the Arabs, their state of mind, must be taken into account. The Commission urges political and psychological factors to be reckoned with in the determination of absorptive capacity. Were the Commission at least to argue that a smaller Jewish immigration would promote peace with the Arabs and would thus eliminate the need of recurrent repression of riots, there might be some semblance of excuse for such recommendations. The Commission clearly states, however, that any Jewish immigration will be opposed by the Arabs who will continue to stage uprisings. The entire question of immigration therefore is intended to be nothing more than a small attempt to appease Arab feelings. But if Arab feelings are to be taken into consideration, then certainly as the League of Nations very well expressed it the suffering of the two people—the Jews and the Arabs—is far from equal. The Arabs have vast lands whither they can go, whereas the Jew has no home at all. It is a tragic irony on the part of our friendly Commissioners that they place the convenience of the Arabs above the suffering of the vast Jewish masses—a suffering of which they certainly cannot be ignorant.

The Commission, however, so inclines toward favoring the Arabs that it is even willing to be inconsistent when it happens to be for Arab benefit and at the expense of the Jewish people. Thus the Commission grants that concessions to the Arabs have been carried to extremes by the British government and that such a policy of concessions has been a failure. Accordingly we would expect that if the policy has already been carried to extreme, it should be carried no further. If it is useless to make further concessions to the Arabs because they will remain intransigent in their demands, then obviously why proceed further to irritate the Jews? Yet the Commission is ready to

bar the possibility of the Jews ever becoming a majority in Palestine even though it grants that even a restricted immigration will not appease the Arabs. The case is even more glaring in the matter of the Arab Agency. The Royal Commission finds that the Jews have an advantage in presenting their case before public opinion in England, especially before Parliament—an advantage which the Arabs do not similarly enjoy. In order therefore to equalize the Arabs with the Jews in that respect, the Commission is ready to invite representatives of other Arab states who legally and in fact have no relationship with Palestine at all, to sit as an Arab Agency which should control the destinies of Arabic Palestine. Realizing that the Jews would obviously object to such an arrangement, the Commission tries to soothe the Jews with the assurance that concessions on the part of the Jews might lead to the mollifying of anti-Semitism in other Arab countries. The logic of this situation may be precisely the reverse. Sharp exchanges between the Jews and representatives of other Arabic countries in an Arab Agency might well lead to repercussions abroad more serious than if the two people had no contact whatsoever. And again the Commission admits doubts whether such a concession would satisfy the Arabs. Nevertheless it insists upon making it.

III

But by far the most serious attack upon the Jewish position in the report of the Commission is the switch from a Pan-Arab to a Palestinian-Arab orientation. Early in its report the Commission declares that if Britain had realized that there would be Arab objections to the establishment of the Jewish National Home, it is doubtful whether it would have undertaken to implement the Mandate as it did. If Britain, in other words, suspected that the Arabs would oppose the Jewish National Home it would not have accepted the Mandate subject to the Balfour Declaration. This statement, undermining as it does the entire basis of Britain's responsibility in Palestine, deserves careful scrutiny. But even a superficial study will reveal its utter groundlessness. If Britain were so naive in 1917 as to assume that there would be no Arab objections, it certainly had ample warning in the riots of 1920 and '21, which took place before the Mandate for Palestine was signed. The Haycroft Commission in 1921 already claimed to have found a developed Arab Nationalist movement which was objecting to the incursion of the Jews. England thus was informed by her own Commission that the Palestine Arabs would object to the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine.

How then did England accept the Mandate with the Balfour Declaration as an integral part of it?

Very obviously England was prepared not to reckon with Arab objection. But did England not consider Arab opinion at all? The answer is that at the time England thought of the Arab world in general. It viewed the entire Arab world and was prepared to grant independence to most of it, leaving one small portion to be occupied by the Jews. King Feisal and Lawrence were prepared to acknowledge the Jewish right to Palestine provided the Arabs received independence in all the other territories which were promised them. Subsequently, in the course of less than two decades the Arabs did achieve substantially all that Feisal had hoped for. To claim now that although the Arabs did receive practically all that they expected, nevertheless the promise of Feisal is no longer binding because the Arabs did not receive it immediately, is sheer sophistry. The Arabs received what they asked for and were prepared to grant the Jews their small home in Palestine. Of course the Palestinian Arabs were to be governed by the Jews. At the time, however, Britain had confidence in the Jewish people and knew that it would not mistreat a minority population. Since then the Jews have repeatedly given the Arabs of Palestine assurances that their positions would be fully protected. But clearly Britain originally was dividing the

entire Arab world, and it left one corner for the Jews, the Arabs receiving about 97 per cent of their territory and about 3 per cent being reserved for the Jews.

When the Royal Commission now inverts the entire picture and places the Palestinian Arabs in the focus as though they were the Arabs originally contemplated by England, it is obviously not speaking of the same things that England did twenty years ago. Clearly if there were only one single country, namely Palestine, under consideration, the Arab claims would certainly be on a par with the Jewish. But as the Mandates Commission well said, the Arabs have numerous lands to which they can turn. Iraq, Syria, the Hedjaz, Saudia Arabia are all Arab lands. Even Transjordania was cut away from Palestine in satisfaction of the promise to the Arabs. Now for England to turn about and assert that it was the Palestinian Arabs that she always had in mind is outright misinterpretation. Governmental ineptitude coupled with outright ill-will, as the Commission itself admits, have created this situation in Palestine, the price of which the Jews are now asked to pay.

Whatever the outcome of the situation in Palestine may be the Jews have learned their lesson once again. *"Al tivt'ha bindivim."* Put not your trust in princes. The salvation of Jewry will come not from England but through self-emancipatory efforts of the Jewish world.

The Jewish Community Council of Detroit

By William I. Boxerman*

I

THE need for a more inclusive organization of Jewish life is today finding expression in a number of communities in the form of community councils. They differ widely in their sponsorship, scope, and development. This brief article relates some of the experiences in the establishment of the Jewish Community Council of Detroit. Because of the limitation of space, the writer cannot present all of the historical background leading to the creation of the Council, nor the forces which have brought it into being. However, a review of the procedures and methods employed in the process of organization, as well as a statement of its aims, may shed light upon a very timely topic.

Partly because of the vision and foresight of the Federation leadership in Detroit, and partly because of the pressure from elements who felt that the Federation itself did not embrace all of their major interests, provision was made in the 1936 budget for the establishment of a community council. The first concrete step towards its realization was taken in the fall of 1936, with the employment of a professional person to direct the project. After the Board of the Federation had been presented with an outline of councils in other cities, it appointed a committee to serve as a nucleus for organization. This committee was authorized to draw into the picture representatives of the Committee of 21 (which consisted of various organizations active in building the New Home for the Aged), active members of the local branch of the American Jewish Congress, and numerous leaders of the larger groups in Detroit. Every effort was made to have the organizational committee as representative as possible of the various viewpoints in the community. It was recognized that only such a committee could draft a satisfactory plan. The organizational committee, as it finally evolved, included 30 people, who undertook an extensive program of education to make the Jewish community aware of what was transpiring. Both through the medium of the Yiddish and of the Anglo-Jewish press, the community was impressed with the fact that a

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great hope was soon to become a reality. A series of talks carried the message to the audiences of two Jewish radio hours. Interest in the projected Council ran high, as the local chapter of the American Jewish Congress, representing 60 organizations, passed a resolution in which it "viewed with favorable interest the proposed establishment of the Jewish Community Council."

The organizational committee spent many weeks in drafting a plan for the Council. Much of the same clash of viewpoints which later occurred during the conferences of organizations also took place within the committee itself. Differences were ironed out, compromises were effected, and in March 1937, after numerous revisions of the plan, the organizational committee presented to the Detroit Jewish Community a *modus operandi* for the Jewish Community Council of Detroit. The proposed Constitution was printed in the local Anglo-Jewish and Yiddish papers and copies of it were mailed to the officers of all Jewish organizations in the city, who were notified that conferences would be held for clarification of the plan. In the intervening time, they were asked to consider the Constitution at their meetings, and to elect delegates to the conference who could propose necessary amendments. An entire month was devoted to these discussions. Several members of the organizational committee, who were active in the numerous Yiddish-speaking groups, undertook to interpret the Constitution to their constituency. The committee felt that this type of interpretation to individual organizations could most effectively be done by members of the particular groups.

II

On the eve of the first conference of organizations regarding the Jewish Community Council of Detroit, Simon Shetzer, chairman of the organizational committee, issued a statement embodying the aspirations of the founders:

> "Individuals and organizations have from time to time advocated a community council, but not until now has it seemed feasible to establish such a body. Not until now has there been that measure of unity in the community which would assure at least a moderate degree of success for such an undertaking. For it should be borne in mind that a council in and of itself cannot unify a community which does not *a priori* feel a sense of unity and a need for collective action on matters of common concern. The past several years have seen a gradual coalescence of the various heretofore estranged and frankly antagonistic forces in the community. . . . We have learned not merely to work together, but, what is even more important, to tolerate and accept points of view with which we ourselves do not entirely agree. . . .
>
> "With this immediate experience of cooperative effort and with this sentiment of and for Jewish unity more definitely crystallized in recent years than ever before, the formation of a community council at this particular juncture becomes almost inevitable.
>
> "The Community Council is not only a program of Jewish survival, but it is at the same time a conduit through which a positive, coordinated program of Jewish life can be carried on. With this premise basic to any intelligent approach, the proposed constitution clearly defines the type of organizations eligible for membership in the Council, requiring that groups otherwise qualified must have 'a constructive interest in the preservation of some aspect of Jewish life' and that they must dedicate themselves faithfully to pursue among other aims and purposes that of helping 'to maintain the dignity and integrity of the Jewish people.
>
> "We consider these provisions to be the essence of the whole program—the preservation of the Jewish people *as* Jews and of Jewish values. . . ."

The first conference of organizations regarding the Jewish Community Council took place on April 25, 1937. Three hundred people, representing 180 Jewish organizations, gathered for discussion of the proposed Constitution. So intense was the interest in this meeting, that the delegates began to arrive before the scheduled hour. The proper psychological setting was provided for the occasion by seating the delegates at long tables in parliamentary manner. Members of the organizational committee were seated at the head of the auditorium, so that they might be readily available for clarification of various points in the Constitution. Numerous questions were raised. Perhaps the most

noteworthy characteristic of this conference, which lasted for more than three hours, was the variety of organizations gathered together through their representatives.

Each sentence of the proposed Constitution was discussed and voted upon separately. Amendments were made whenever a majority of the delegates approved of them. Since each organization had only one voting delegate, the portion of the Constitution which had been approved at the close of this conference represented the will of the majority of organizations. Interestingly enough, one of the clauses in the Constitution which aroused the most heated debate was that excluding from eligibility for membership "organizations which are primarily political in nature." The supporters of this restricting clause pointed to its absolute necessity on the ground that the Council was being dedicated to a "survival program." Inasmuch as the chief aim of a political organization does not embrace this ideal, they argued, this type of group has no place in the Council. The clause was passed by a large vote.

A second conference of organizations, to complete the consideration of the Constitution, was held on June 6, 1937. After making a number of changes, the delegates gave formal approval to the proposed Constitution. At this conference the Council was asked to act upon the Polish situation. No action could be taken in the name of the Council, since it did not yet exist officially. Nevertheless, a committee was appointed which, in cooperation with a number of organizations, sent a delegation with a protest to Washington.

In order to be most democratic in procedure, after the second conference, copies of the revised Constitution were again sent to all organizations invited to the preliminary meetings. A form for ratification and an application for membership accompanied each copy of the Constitution. It was decided that as soon as one-third of the organizations elected their representatives the first official meeting of the Council would be held.

Up to the present time (October 1937) 164 Jewish organizations have become affiliated with the Jewish Community Council of Detroit. These groups have a total membership of over 40,000 Jews, or about three-fourths of the estimated adult Jewish population of Detroit. The first meeting of the Council, held recently, was largely of an organizational nature. Officers and an executive committee were elected. A number of important issues were raised which must be met and which will, no doubt, be included in the program of activities to be undertaken by the Council.

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A few words about the aims of the Jewish Community Council might not be inappropriate. The purposes of the Council are as follows: (1) to help maintain the dignity and integrity of Jewish life; (2) to develop an articulate, intelligent, and effective public opinion on Jewish problems and interests; (3) to coordinate, insofar as possible, the activities of the various segments of the Detroit Jewish Community, and whenever advisable, to cooperate with other agencies; (4) to promote and advance the cultural, social, economic, and philanthropic interests, and the national and spiritual aspirations of the Jewish people; (5) to help safeguard and defend the civil, political, economic, and religious rights of the Jewish people, wherever such rights are in jeopardy; (6) to encourage the amicable adjustment of differences between individuals and/or organizations, by providing the appropriate machinery for conciliation and arbitration; (7) to cooperate with other agencies for mutual understanding with the non-Jewish population; (8) to cooperate with existing non-local agencies having similar or related purposes.

The Jewish Community Council of Detroit differs in at least two important respects from the councils which have been

organized in other communities. Its scope is much broader and to carry out its aims will entail a wide range of activities over a long period of time. But what is much more important, is the statement by the Detroit Council that an organization, to be eligible for membership, must have "a constructive interest in the preservation of some aspect of Jewish life." No other council defines eligibility in this manner. In effect, then, the Detroit Council is predicated upon the "survival" philosophy. It recognizes that Jewish life has values common to all of its component groups, that these values are worth preserving, and that the organizations comprising the Council hope in some measure to perpetuate these values through joint participation and group solidarity. This is a far cry from the assimilationist tendencies apparent among certain groups in the Jewish Community not so many years ago!

The Constitution of the Jewish Community Council lays the foundation for an organization that may be able, eventually, to stand on its own feet. All of the machinery is provided for independent operation. Provision is made for an executive committee with power to carry out a very extensive program. Above all, democracy is the basis for the functioning of the Council, for the actions of this executive committee are constantly subject to review by the Council as a whole. In this manner, the founders of the Council wish to make it impossible for any small group of individuals to control what is intended to be a democratic community organization.

It is difficult to say exactly how the Jewish Community Council of Detroit will develop. Community leaders hope that after the Council has undergone an initial period of experience, they will be able to point to it as an exemplification of the old Hebrew saying, which has been adopted as the seal of the organization: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" However, the active leadership of the Council has no illusions about the difficulties and dangers which the newly-formed organization faces. There is the whole question of how much the Council should partake of the nature of a planning body which delegates specific tasks to individual organizations, and how much it should be an actions body, carrying out activities directly under its own wing. Upon this there is some difference of opinion. Perhaps the greatest danger lies in moving too rapidly. Many of the activities envisioned by the leaders of the Council are part of a long-range program of community organization and cannot be attempted in the near future. On the other hand, there are today in the Detroit Jewish Community strong pressures from influential groups for the Council to undertake certain activities immediately. The chief problem lies in steering a straight course between the scylla of doing nothing but discussing and the charybdis of acting upon sharply controversial issues.

In their eagerness to "solve" Jewish problems, groups in a community grow impatient with the profundity of their difficulties. And so they are inclined to view a new type of community organization, such as the Council, either with skepticism and indifference or with the expectation that it will provide a panacea for all Jewish ailments. Leaders in the Council are therefore constantly stressing to the members of the Council that they cannot assume these attitudes toward the processes of community organization. Neither the Council nor any other type of organization can of itself solve all the basic problems of the Jewish community. The Council at present represents an initial stage in the development of a well-knit community. It may rightly be viewed as an experiment undertaken in response to obvious needs. As such, it will be watched with keen interest not only in Detroit but in other Jewish communities.

What Religion Is Not

By MILTON STEINBERG

IF religion were in all actuality what Dr. Link asserts it to be in his best seller, there would be little to justify any intelligent person who happens to be unchurched in returning to it. For, *The Return to Religion** paints a picture of the character and place of the religious life that is incomplete, distorted and, what is worse, dangerous because of the appealing but partial truths which it communicates. Professor Wiliam Lyon Phelps may feel, if the testimony on the dust jacket is to be believed, that this is "the finest book on practical psychology" he has ever read. This review urges subscribers of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST to read it only if they wish to get from it a clear vision of what religion should not be.

Dr. Link is a psychologist, the author of a work entitled *Employment Psychology,* and a consultant in problems of personality. In his professional capacity he has been called upon to meet with thousands of maladjusted human beings and to aid them in rehabilitating themselves. He has discovered that people brood too much, that they are often involved in a tangle of emotions from which there is only one escape — the life of action. The difficulty with most unhappy persons is, he tells us, that they are introverts, that they use their heads too much and their feet too little, that they do only the things which they want to do, which is bad for them, rather than the things they do not want to do, which would be good for them. Wherefore he has come to the conclusion that organized religion is desirable in that it gives a person something unpleasant to do, thus turning his energies outward and benefiting his soul if it be sick. In other words, the church is an unpleasant, but by very virtue of that fact, a salubrious medicine. And lest anyone suspect that this review misrepresents Dr. Link's opinion, let us quote from page 19 in his own words:

"My reason for attending church again is that I have recommended it to so many others. I go because I would rather lie in bed late on Sunday mornings, the only chance for a good sleep I have during the week. I go because I would rather read the Sunday papers. I go because I know it will please my old father, when he learns of it, and my parents-in-law whom I shall undoubtedly see there. I go because I shall meet and have to shake hands with people, many of whom do not interest me in the least; because, if I don't go, my children consider that they have a good reason for not going to Sunday School; because I might be asked to do something I don't want to do; because I may disagree with what the minister has to say. I go because some of my best friends, who know the details of my life, consider me a hypocrite. I go because I do not believe in all the doctrines of this church, or any other church. I go, in short, because I hate to go and because I know that it will do me good."

Now Dr. Link has recaptured a partial but valid insight into the workings of personality. It is true that much of misery of soul is the result of withdrawal from life, brooding and self-centeredness. It has long been known to teachers of religion that for most people happiness involves a turning of one's energies outward, a loss of self in something larger than one's ego. All organized religions have recognized that one of the functions of the religious life and its public expression is that of enabling the individual to save himself by losing himself in other individuals and in the group. Dr. Link, in fairness to him, recognizes that he propounds no novel thesis, indeed he glories in the fact that he is reasserting old truths and that he gives them specific application in the maladies of the sick

**The Return to Religion,* by Henry C. Link, The Macmillan Company, New York.

soul, in business, the training of children, education and marriage. In all these fields he insists that religion has a contribution to make toward success and happiness by its program of activities and its insistence on self-negation on behalf of others. And so indeed it has.

Unfortunately, Dr. Link sees in religion a prophylactic against personal unhappiness and a medicament for the wounded heart—and nothing more. He is entirely unaware of the fact that religion represents also an attempt to attain to reasoned insight into the scheme of things, to a philosophy of the Universe and of man's place in it. In that aspect of the religious life, Dr. Link has little interest. As a matter of fact, he seems but little constrained by considerations of truth and error altogether. "Faith in fallacies," he assures us, "is better than no faith at all . . . foolish beliefs are better than no beliefs at all." And so they are if one is concerned not with intellectual clarity but only with the use of the church to take care of the patients of psychological clinics. But for those who are not sick in mind, religion must meet the demands of reason, must cleave to truth and must make an honest contribution to helping the individual attain to a deeper insight into the structure of reality.

This religion of Dr. Link's, which is at best a matter of any means to escape from boredom and introspection, reveals its true character when he turns it to the problems of society. Naturally enough, he has no sympathy with the attempt on the part of organized religion to remake the structure of man's group life. To him the application of religious ideals to social problems is an abuse of its true function —the rehabilitation of the individual diseased soul. As a result, he is unsympathetic to all efforts to raise the standard of living for the masses, he advocates poverty as the best discipline for the heart, he objects to social discontent on the part of the underprivileged as a violation of the injunction in the Decalogue against covetousness. Finally he quotes with disfavor a resolution adopted by the General Council of Congregational Churches which asked for a cooperative social economy. Such an attitude seems to Dr. Link to be not only irrelevant to religion but contrary to it. He objects to it on the grounds that it would "institutionalize the weak instead of humanizing the strong." In brief, he thinks that so long as men can be saved as individuals, society may safely be allowed to consign itself to damnation, that salvation consists in remaking personality without regard as to whether the social order works to inhibit and pervert the soul.

No religious person will deny the importance in any scheme of salvation of regenerating individual character. Similarly no advocate of the religious life will question its function as an aid to the sick soul in its efforts to find itself. But anyone devoted to an understanding of religion must regard Dr. Link's exposition as so partial in character as to be a distortion and perversion.

For, if Dr. Link has his way, religion will be exclusively a clinical technique for the weak. It will bear justifiably the reproach of intellectual dishonesty and of social indifference. Those who understand religion aright know better. They realize that it should be not alone a stay for the faltering but a guide and stimulant to those who walk erect. They expect of it that it shall resolve the problems of the universe for them as best it may—but always in conformity with the most rigid canons of intellectual honor. If it is to them a refuge from the evils of life, it is also a mentor in insisting that those evils which spring from social inequities shall be eliminated. To Dr. Link the kingdom of God means no more than a normal temperature of the soul; to those who comprehend religion better, it is the vision of free human beings in a just, merciful and sane society, against a background of an honest, clear-eyed faith in the universe and God.